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UNH Professor Contributes To New Book Exploring Torah Through Queer Lens

Apr 12, 2010



DURHAM, NH – Each week, millions of Jews listen to a portion of the Torah read aloud, a tradition that has provided interpretation and commentary of the Hebrew Bible for centuries. Following on this ancient tradition, “Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible” brings together some of the world’s leading rabbis, scholars, and writers, including Marla Brettschneider, professor of political science and women’s studies at the University of New Hampshire, to interpret the Torah through a “bent lens.”

With commentaries on the 54 weekly Torah portions and six major Jewish holidays, the concise yet substantive writings open up stimulating new insights and highlight previously neglected perspectives. Published by NYU Press, the collection unites the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight-allied writers, including some of the most central figures in contemporary American Judaism. All bring to the table unique methods of reading and

interpreting that allow the Torah to speak to modern concerns of sexuality, identity, gender, and LGBT life.

“Torah Queeries” offers cultural critique, social commentary and a vision of community transformation, all done through biblical interpretation. Written to engage readers, draw them in, and, at times, provoke them, “Torah Queeries” examines topics as divergent as the Levitical sexual prohibitions, the experience of the Exodus, the rape of Dinah, the life of Joseph, and the ritual practices of the ancient Israelites. Most powerfully, the commentaries here chart a future of inclusion and social justice deeply rooted in the Jewish textual tradition.

The book has been praised by the Jewish and LGBT communities.



“This unique and lively work blends the traditional Jewish format of dividing Torah into weekly portions with specifically queer perspectives on them. ‘Torah Queeries’ unveils a new queer Jewish way to understand this most sacred and central text that will surely stimulate and challenge the reader,” said Rabbi Rebecca Alpert, author of “Whose Torah? A Concise Guide to Progressive Judaism.”

“Provides a challenge to readers and preachers who are single-mindedly devoted to the straight and narrow,” said Daniel Boyarin, author of “Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture.”


“Gives engaged, pertinent, GLBT-focused meaning to the Tanach. The analyses offered here work to break boundaries, queer-ing, celebrating, and re-creating our Jewish texts and traditions in meaningful ways. These acts of reading become the radical movement of making a space for GLBT Jews that is clever, humorous, loving, and thought-provoking,” said Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, New York.


Brettschneider is founder and past coordinator of queer studies at UNH and currently serves as coordinator of women’s studies. Her most recent book is “The Family Flamboyant: Race Politics, Queer Families, Jewish Lives” — winner of a 2007 IPPY (Independent Publishers) Award in the GLBT category. Her earlier books include “The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism,” winner of the Gustavus Meyers Human Rights Award.


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Marla Brettschneider, professor of political science and women's studies at the University of New Hampshire

of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

PHOTO

Marla Brettschneider, professor of political science and women's studies at the University of New Hampshire

http://www.unh.edu/presidentialevents/speakersbureau/images/brettschneider_06L90321.jpg

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